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Abstract

This article examines the co-occurrence of violence against women and violence against animals based on interviews with 15 survivors in Saskatchewan, Canada. The qualitative data reveal complex dynamics of the human-animal bond for victims/survivors. Insufficient social supports exacerbate barriers for leaving relationships with animals when experiencing intimate partner violence; nonetheless, the participants perceived animals as crucial to their well-being. Care of horses and livestock is further complicated by financial issues and difficulty evacuating large animals. Survivors emphasized the need for social programs to assist survivors who care for companion animals and large animals.

Content warning: This article contains descriptions of violence and abuse toward companion animals, horses, and livestock, as well as examples of animals being killed.

**Intimate Partner Violence, Animal Maltreatment, and Barriers to Safety for Survivors
with Companion Animals and Livestock: Findings from a Qualitative Study**

Introduction

The lives of human and non-human animals are inextricably linked and, unfortunately, so are trends of violence against both people and their companion animals. Previous research has demonstrated the link between intimate partner violence (IPV) and animal maltreatment (Cleary et al., 2021). Using a nationally representative Canadian sample, Fitzgerald and colleagues (2021) found that less than 1% of the general population experienced their partner threatening or harming their companion animal; however, over 13% of respondents who experienced physical or sexual IPV also experienced threats or harm toward animals. In a study by Febres and colleagues (2014), 41% of men who participated in IPV intervention programs reported perpetrating animal abuse, as compared to 3% of men in the general population. Companion animals are threatened, emotionally and physically abused, neglected, and killed by perpetrators of IPV (Barrett et al., 2018, 2020; Cleary et al., 2021; Collins et al., 2018; Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Stevenson et al., 2018). Victims also report that their animal companions have “gone missing” or had “accidents”—likely the result of their partner’s violence (Doherty & Hornosty, 2008). Research and domestic violence death reviews suggest that co-occurrence of animal maltreatment with IPV increases the risk for severe violence and lethality (Barrett et al., 2020, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2019).

Research has demonstrated that there are subtypes of perpetrators of IPV. For example, some validated typologies include perpetrators who are generally violent and antisocial, as well as those who use violence solely against their partner or their partner and children (e.g., Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000). Other typologies differentiate between coercive controlling

violence and IPV not motivated by control (e.g., Johnson, 2006). Some research has demonstrated that perpetrators of IPV can be differentiated by their use of reactive versus proactive (instrumental) violence (e.g., Ennis et al., 2017). Febres et al. (2014) commented on antisocial traits and tendencies displayed by individuals who harm their partners and animals, as well as their various motivations for animal abuse and IPV, “including retaliation, control, and the expression of anger” (p. 1068).

The relationship between coercive control, threats, and animal abuse is well documented within the research literature (Barrett et al., 2020; Giesbrecht, 2022b; Hardesty et al., 2013). Women who report that their partner mistreated their animal companions also report more frequent and severe psychological, emotional, and sexual abuse and controlling behaviours compared to survivors whose partners did not mistreat their animals (Barrett et al., 2020; Giesbrecht, 2022b). Further, care for animals is often a barrier to leaving/ending the relationship, which exacerbates the danger of IPV. Many victims/survivors of IPV may delay leaving due to concerns regarding the safety of their animals or if there are barriers to taking their animals with them (Barrett et al., 2018, 2020; Cleary et al., 2021; Collins et al., 2018; Hardesty et al., 2013; Stevenson et al., 2018; Wuerch et al., 2020). Even when perpetrators of IPV do not threaten or harm animals, care for animals is a barrier for many women to end the relationship if they fear being unable to take their animals with them. Conversely, however, concern about animals’ well-being can also solidify a decision to end a relationship. Survivors may try to escape the violent partner to ensure safety for their animals (Barrett et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2018; Giesbrecht, 2022b; Wuerch et al., 2020, 2021).

Companion animals often provide a sense of comfort and support for individuals experiencing or exposed to IPV, including adult victims and their children (Barrett et al., 2018;

Crawford & Bohac Clarke, 2012; Collins et al., 2018; Giesbrecht, 2022a; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Reliance on companion animals can also increase when victims of IPV experience isolation.

Victims of IPV have stated that their animals offer them protection, security, and love (Barrett et al., 2018; Hardesty et al., 2013).

The Saskatchewan Context

The Canadian prairie province of Saskatchewan has a disproportionately high incidence of IPV and domestic homicide. The rate of police-reported IPV in Saskatchewan is the highest among the Canadian provinces and over double the national average (724 incidents per 100,000 population compared to 344 per 100,000; Conroy, 2021a). However, the actual occurrence of IPV is undoubtedly much higher than what has been reported; 70% of spousal violence victims report that the abuse never came to the attention of police (Burczycka, 2016). In Canada, 718 adult victims were murdered by current or former intimate partners in a 10-year period (2010-2019); 79% of these victims were female. Of these victims, 46 were Saskatchewan residents, a rate of 3.92 per 100,000 population—the highest rate among the Canadian provinces (Dawson et al., 2021). It is common for IPV to continue after the end of a relationship, and data from Statistics Canada show that more individuals, particularly women, are victimized by former spouses as opposed to current spouses (11% versus 2%; Conroy, 2021b).

Over one-third of Saskatchewan residents live outside a census metropolitan area (35.6%), double the national rate (16.8%; Statistics Canada, 2017). This relatively large rural population is related to the high rates of IPV observed in Saskatchewan. In the Canadian provinces, rates of IPV are higher in rural areas (548 victims per 100,000 population, compared to a rate of 300 in urban areas; Conroy, 2021a). When examined by gender, the rate of IPV against women in rural areas is 860 per 100,000 population versus 246 for men (Conroy, 2021a).

Rates of intimate partner homicide are also higher outside urban settings, with 31% of victims from 2010- 2019 being killed in rural, remote, and northern areas (Dawson et al., 2021).

Rural women's experiences of IPV are exacerbated by specific infrastructural, geographical, and cultural complexities. Domestic violence services may be limited or unavailable in rural areas (Maki, 2019), housing options are often limited (Maki, 2019; Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016), and emergency response times can be slow (McKay, 2019; Ruddell & O'Connor, 2022). Survivors who travel to access services may face long distances, icy and snowy driving conditions, and unreliable or inaccessible roads. Aspects of rural culture—such as rigid gender roles, firearm ownership, and lack of anonymity or confidentiality—further contribute to rates of IPV and barriers to safety in rural communities (Doherty & Hornosty, 2008; Jeffrey et al., 2019; Wuerch et al., 2019). In addition, victims may have responsibility for, and financial investment in, livestock and companion animals, which creates an additional barrier to both human and animal safety and impacts decisions to leave the home when IPV is occurring (Crawford & Bohac Clarke, 2012; Doherty & Hornosty, 2008; Giesbrecht, 2022a,b; Wuerch et al., 2020).

Purpose

Most existing research on IPV and animal maltreatment has focused on the experiences and perspectives of pet owners/guardians, with much less attention to survivors with horses and livestock (exceptions include: Crawford & Bohac Clarke, 2012; Doherty & Hornosty, 2008; Giesbrecht, 2022a,b,c; Wuerch et al., 2020, 2021). Most studies with victims/survivors as research participants have included those who have accessed shelters (e.g., Barrett et al., 2018, 2020; Crawford & Bohac Clarke, 2012; Hardesty et al., 2013). A smaller number of studies have included survivors who did not stay in a shelter (e.g., Barrett et al., 2022; Doherty & Hornosty,

2008; Giesbrecht, 2022b). Therefore, more information is needed to understand the experiences of women who did not seek shelter for IPV while caring for animals and the significance of human-animal relationships in this context.

The objectives of this exploratory study were to 1) document the experiences of survivors who had diverse types of animals (companion animals, service animals¹, and livestock and large animals); 2) describe survivors' experiences with animal safekeeping in the context of IPV; and 3) gather responses from survivors who had not accessed domestic violence shelters, in addition to those who had.

Method

The present study consisted of qualitative interviews with women who had experienced IPV and owned animals (companion animals, horses, or livestock). The study was part of a larger mixed-methods study which included online surveys for victims/survivors who owned animals, the general public, and human service and animal welfare professionals (Giesbrecht, 2022a,b,c). The study was approved by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board (2019-117).

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

The recruitment poster for the study was posted on the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan's (PATHS) and the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (SPCA) websites and social media accounts and shared in the organizations' email newsletters. Information about the study was shared in radio and print stories by media outlets across the province of Saskatchewan. An email message inviting participation was sent to various organizations, with a request that they share the invitation with their contacts (e.g., disability organizations, animal rescues, and services that assist victims/survivors of violence). Upon completion of the online survey, victims/survivors were

asked if they would be interested in participating in a confidential telephone/video conference interview (or would like more information before deciding). Respondents could then enter their contact information—this was collected via a file termination survey, which was not connected to their survey responses.

Interviews were conducted by the first author between January and March 2020, either by telephone or using Zoom video conferencing software (audio only). One participant had a disability that prevented her from participating in a verbal interview; she was provided with the interview guide, to which she responded with written answers. Consent forms were emailed to participants prior to the interview. Participants signed the consent form electronically if they were able; those who did not sign the form electronically provided their written consent in an email. The consent form was reviewed verbally with participants before the interview began.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed prior to data analysis. The anonymized, uncoded transcripts were read independently by both the first and second authors to increase familiarity with the data. Transcripts were then coded using NVivo following an inductive, data-driven approach with no preconceived codes—an approach described as conventional (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) or open coding (Benaquisto, 2008). Most codes were descriptive, with the occasional use of inferential codes to identify abstract or conceptual ideas (Miles et al., 2014). For example, descriptive codes included “maltreatment of horses and livestock,” while inferential codes included “caring for animals in a home where violence is occurring.”

After the initial coding process was completed by the first author, the second author reviewed all coded transcripts using the coding stripes function of NVivo to check for accuracy and comprehensiveness of codes. This review supported the existing codes. The codes were then

consolidated into broader themes. As well as the themes reported here, which include participants' experiences of IPV, animal maltreatment, survivors' bonds with animals, and escaping IPV while caring for animals, survivors also provided insight on several additional themes, including violence post-separation and interactions with service providers. The present article focuses on themes regarding care for animals.

These findings demonstrate how survivors' relationships with animals shape their experiences of IPV and seeking safety. The analysis provides important empirical evidence on the co-occurrence of, and interconnection between, IPV, animal maltreatment, and barriers to safety for survivors with companion animals and livestock. The data show that relationships with animals are an important source of comfort and support for women experiencing IPV. Challenges with animal safekeeping in the context of IPV are not attributable to the human-animal bond itself; rather, these challenges are largely the product of men's choice to use violence against their partners and animals. These challenges are further exacerbated by broader structural (and infrastructural) barriers that inhibit women's overall safety.

Findings

Participant Demographics

A total of 15 women living in the province of Saskatchewan were interviewed. While the study was open to victims/survivors of IPV of any gender who had animals at the time they experienced IPV, all participants who volunteered for the study were women. All of the women shared examples of experiencing IPV from men (i.e., heterosexual relationships). Demographics in Table 1 indicate if the women lived in a rural or urban area and what types of animals they owned at the time they were experiencing IPV. All 15 participants owned a cat or dog when experiencing IPV. Three participants had a single companion animal, while other participants

owned multiple animals, with several caring for various types. Survivors' experiences of violence varied. One participant had ended a 25-year relationship months before participating in the study; others spoke about relationships that had ended years before. One participant had experienced IPV in more than one relationship. One participant had been exposed to IPV as a child and shared those experiences.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics	
Age	<i>M</i>
Current	50.7
When IPV began ¹	29.7
Location	% (<i>n</i>)
Rural	40 (6)
Urban	60 (9)
Animal Ownership When IPV Occurring	% (<i>n</i>)
Companion animal	100 (15)
Horse or livestock	47 (7)
Service animal	0 (0)
Type of Animals²	% (<i>n</i>)
Cat(s)	80 (12)
Dog(s)	73 (11)
Bird(s)	13 (2)
Fish	7 (1)
Horse(s)	47 (7)
Cow(s)	27 (4)
Pig(s)	13 (2)
Mules(s) and donkey(s)	7 (1)
Chicken(s)	7 (1)
Total Sample	100 (15)

Notes. ¹*M* age when IPV began does not include the participant who was exposed to IPV as a child; for the woman who experienced IPV in more than one relationship, her age at the earlier relationship is included. ²Type of animals owned indicates the number of participants who owned each type of animal.

Findings are grouped into five broad themes: experiences of IPV; experiences of animal maltreatment; survivors' bonds with animals; escaping IPV while caring for animals; and survivors' recommendations.

Experiences of IPV

Participants recounted experiences of various forms of IPV perpetrated by their male partners, including coercive control and psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and economic abuse. When survivors spoke about their past experiences of IPV, many risk factors were evident. Several had experienced potentially life-threatening violence; perpetrators told women they would kill them and detailed their plans to do so. Participants experienced partners damaging property and issuing unfounded accusations of infidelity while being unfaithful themselves. Partners attempted to have survivors arrested and perpetrated other forms of legal abuse. In some cases, forms of IPV were enacted at the survivor's workplace. Multiple participants had experienced severe physical violence, including strangulation. For some women, these assaults happened when they were pregnant or in front of children. Some participants had not experienced physical violence but experienced psychological abuse and coercive control:

It was nothing physical; it was all emotional. Basically, I wasn't allowed to go anywhere. I could go to work. I could go to the store, [but] I had to report what store I was going to. I couldn't be too long. I would get yelled at and in big trouble. It was demeaning, and [I was] ridiculed, and I felt like a small child if I was late. My contact with my family was severely frowned upon. I couldn't talk to my sister. If I did, I was yelled at: "Why?" and "What did you talk about?" He would check my phone to see who I texted throughout the day. I didn't have friends . . . I could do work during work time, but I couldn't do functions or anything after hours. . . I was never left alone. I was never allowed to be myself.

Survivors experienced economic abuse, which in some cases was related to ownership of farmland and animals. Women explained that while they paid for animals, everything was in

their husbands' names. After they had been together for sixteen years, one woman's partner coerced her into signing a legal agreement that stated she had no right to any of their shared property. Some women recalled that although they did the farm work, it was expected that any income would go back into the farm. They did not have access to their own money, while their husbands worked off the farm and kept their earnings to spend as they pleased. For some women in urban settings, their husbands worked at high-paying jobs but did not contribute to the family's finances and belittled their wives' careers or salaries. Others experienced their husbands refusing to work, leaving the survivor to shoulder all financial responsibilities. In all cases, economic abuse created major barriers to escaping the relationship.

Experiences of Animal Maltreatment

Some survivors had their animals before they got into the relationship, while others jointly acquired animals with their partner before IPV began. A survivor who owned horses, dogs, and cats explained that when she purchased the animals, she did not expect her partner to become violent:

. . . When I [got] all those pets, I never thought I will end up in a homeless shelter. I never thought I will have to apply for social assistance. I was making [a good wage]... Anybody can end up in this situation.

Participants recounted forms of animal maltreatment, including physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse of companion animals, threats to harm companion animals and livestock, as well as instances where animals were intentionally killed by their abusive partners. In some cases, threats, abuse, and killing of animals took place after survivors had exited the relationship.

Maltreatment of Horses and Livestock

Physical Abuse and Neglect. Participants spoke of their partners' rough treatment and deliberate injury of large animals. One woman recalled, "He broke his hand punching one of the horses in the head." The same individual "just [didn't] care if [he hurt them]. He literally dropped a bale on one of the horses. A big round bale and the horse was injured."

One survivor spoke of how she alone provided care for livestock, saying, "When it came to feeding and stuff, if I hadn't been there, no, it wouldn't have happened." When she left the farm to end the relationship, she was concerned that the animals would not be cared for. She continued to return to the farm to check on the animals, finding signs of malnourishment and maltreatment, which she reported to animal protection services. The same respondent also described how the need for veterinary care was a source of conflict—she would advocate for having animals seen by a vet, whereas:

. . . in his mind it is survival of the fittest. If they live, they live; if they don't, they die. I [feel that] if you want to be successful [with] livestock, you'll get out of it what you put into it.

Malicious Killing of Farm Animals. Perpetrators killed livestock animals not for food, but as part of their pattern of cruelty toward human and animal victims. One woman told how her partner had killed multiple animals after she had left. He killed her milk cows and shot all of her chickens. She clarified, "he's not killing them because this chicken is for food." He also killed a chicken and a small dog, which were his children's pets. She explained that all of these killings of animals were done "to get even because I left."

Post-Separation Threats and Harm to Animals. A survivor explained that her partner threatened the lives of dogs and horses in an effort to control her. Another woman described her

partner's attitude toward animals on the farm, specifically threats to shoot a sick calf when the woman stated that she wanted to involve animal protection after they had separated: "You want to be like that. . . I'll shoot her . . . I can do what I want,' basically."

Women with horses and livestock feared that their partners might hurt the animals as a means of retaliation. One survivor explained that she got out of the relationship after her partner assaulted her. After she escaped, she feared he might kill her horses:

The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] picked me up on the highway and took me to the nearest small town, and within 10 minutes, he was driving around town looking for me . . . After that, I was in the small town, and I had to wait for a family member to come get me. In that process, he had left already and gone home. So I was petrified that he would be there shooting horses or doing whatever. It was the next day that he got arrested.

As well as neglect and the intentional and unnecessary killing of animals after the end of the relationship, women also suspected animal maltreatment or interference with animals on their own property after separation, for which they could not obtain evidence. One survivor explained, "My horses were let out a few times, but of course, you can't prove how the gate got left open."

One participant explained how her partner engaged in malicious reporting to animal welfare authorities:

Accusations were made to the courts about me and the care of the animals [and] that he wanted so many of the horses. . . He proceeded to call the SPCA and have them come to my home repeatedly for lack of care for my animals. . . During the SPCA investigation, it was found that no, in fact, my animals were very healthy. That report got submitted to the courts, and I kept the animals.

Maltreatment of Companion Animals

Physical Abuse and Neglect. Participants spoke of their partners physically abusing their pets—these men were physically violent to both their partners and companion animals. “He would go kick the dog, and I’d say, ‘Why would you do this?’ And he’s like, ‘It’s better than [hitting] you. My anger has to go somewhere.’” Another survivor recalled that her partner regularly taunted her cat and treated it roughly. It was common for perpetrators to expect animals to listen to them, despite their maltreatment. In addition, some participants’ partners had used physical violence toward animals in an effort to “train” them or exact compliance.

While many of the women described witnessing animal abuse, often as an effort to frighten or control them, some men abused animals when the human survivor was not there to see it. One woman stated that while she witnessed her partner physically harm their puppy, she suspected he perpetrated much worse abuse toward the puppy when she was not there:

I would work [outside of the home, and] I started noticing that the flaps of this puppy’s ears were getting very, very deformed . . . And only later I realized that he was probably twisting the puppy’s ears.

A survivor of childhood domestic violence described witnessing abuse towards animals at the hands of her mother’s partner. She noted that even though this man abused the family dog in front of the children, he also attempted to cover up some incidents of violence. In one event, the dog “supposedly got hit by a vehicle” after escaping the yard. Neighbors later stated:

That day, [mom’s partner] was yelling and screaming and just completely out of control. They heard what sounded like [the dog] being thrown down some stairs. They believe that [mom’s partner] physically hurt [the dog], and [the dog] never ever was hit by a car. The car story was just so he could get out of it or. . . so he could blame us.

He accused the children of having left the gate open and blamed them for the dog being hurt.

As well as being the targets of instrumental violence used by perpetrators, animals also experienced physical harm when they got in the way of physical assaults directed at the women who cared for them. One participant shared, “[dog] was very protective of me . . . When he was aggressive with me, she would get between us, and then she would take a kick.” Another survivor described her dog putting herself in harm’s way to protect the survivor multiple times during a prolonged violent assault, then tugging the owner’s pant leg to urge her to flee. Humans were also harmed when they tried to protect their animal companions: “He would push me down, and a few times I got punched or slapped because I was trying to take [the cat] away from him.”

Women also gave examples of their partners physically neglecting their animals, such as refusing to provide appropriate portions of food. Companion animals were also denied veterinary care: “He never let me take him to the vet, actually. . . I was not to take him out of the house. I’m sure he knew I would . . . tell the vet what happened. I just had to care for it on my own.” One woman described surrendering her puppy to the SPCA to spare it from her partner’s violence.

Killing of Companion Animals. The women recounted horrific examples of their animal companions being murdered:

He killed [the dog] in front of me. He beat him so badly . . . he was punching him. I kept trying to pull him out . . . “Don’t kill him, don’t kill him, leave him alone.” And, he said, “You’re next bitch; keep it up.” And I just sat there, and I just huddled in a corner, and I was just rocking back and forth, just crying. And then he quit. Then, he looked at me; he started to walk over to me . . . He was like a foot taller than me . . . and I’m sitting on the floor, and I’m crying, and [dog] was just lying there, and he said, “One word.” And I’m

sitting there, and I'm crying, and he said, "One more word out of you, you stupid fucking bitch, and you'll be next" . . . so [dog] got away, went into my room and. . . [vet] said he had a bunch of broken ribs and that one of the ribs had punctured his lung. And before they could do anything, [dog] just passed away right in my arms, right there.

Another survivor recounted the horrific death of her kitten:

He never threatened. He just killed one of my kittens, seemingly out of nowhere . . . He grabbed the nearest kitten. He threw her in the dryer. He turned the dryer on, and he pinned me down so I couldn't get to her.

While animals were killed in front of their humans in some cases, others were killed after the survivor had left the relationship or when the survivor was not home. One woman shared, "[I went] to stay with my daughter when my granddaughter was born. When I came back, he said to me, 'Your fucking birds are dead. They're buried out there if you want them.'"

Threats Toward Companion Animals. Throughout the interviews, there were many examples of perpetrators' use of harm and threats toward animals to control human victims. One survivor explained the connection between threats and control:

"Okay, I'm sorry, I'll stop. I will do this, just don't hurt [cat]." You just kind of sit there and be apologetic. Say you're sorry for whatever, even though you know what he's doing is so wrong, but I'm trying to save my cat.

Emotional Abuse of Companion Animals. Perpetrators inflicted emotional abuse on animals by yelling at them and deliberately frightening them:

If he was frustrated, he'd go to punch me and then just miss my face and smash it into the wall. He would do the same thing with the dog.

Several survivors shared that their dogs or cats were terrified of the abuser. The pets often did things to avoid the perpetrator, such as cats staying in the basement when the partner was at home. In some cases, companion animals became aggressive to the abuser or developed behavioral problems as a result of the abuse:

She would have a pretty strong fear reaction to my ex sometimes. She would avoid him, or he would come into the room, and she would run out of it, and she would get stressed and almost panicky . . . I can understand she's a smart dog, she learns, and she's learning that there's somebody we can't trust in the house.

Other men used verbal and emotional abuse, saying cruel things about animals to upset their human owners:

He made it really clear that he hated cats. He would say mean things about cats and what could happen to cats and, "The only thing a cat is good for is to be drowned," or things like that. He would often say very cruel things about her.

Types of Perpetrators of IPV and Animal Maltreatment

Survivors detailed experiences with different types of perpetrators. Some perpetrators strategically used violence toward animals to terrorize and control human victims; others used threats toward animals to intimidate or manipulate human victims but did not act on the threats. A third group of perpetrators were generally violent to both humans and animals but did not seem to use violence against animals with the aim of controlling or manipulating the human victim. Survivors also provided examples of the instrumental use of threats and harm toward animals, as well as violence that appeared to be reactive or impulsive. The survivor whose partner killed her kitten in front of her said:

I don't know that it was planned; it was very sudden. But he knew what he was doing. It was deliberate, and I firmly believe that his intention was to exert power and control and also to deter me from fighting back. He knew that hurting my kittens would achieve this.

Another survivor recalled, "He was just generally abusive to everybody . . . The animals and the humans as well." Another woman shared that both of her former partners had been abusive toward animals but:

It wasn't a way to bring me under control. It was just if [the animals] did something that pissed him off. It was never like, "If you don't do this, I'm going to hurt the animals."

Neither one of them said that.

Survivors recognized the danger to animals posed by the perpetrators and that animal abuse is a risk factor for violence toward humans, regardless of whether the animal abuse takes place in the context of control of the human victim.

Survivors' Bonds with Animals

Despite the challenges experienced by victims of IPV who own animals, participants clearly described the importance of their bonds with their animals, including large and small animals. Survivors described the benefits of the human-animal bond for their mental health and well-being. The data reveal a dynamic of mutual care, which is crucial for many survivors both during and after the relationship.

Partners' Responses to Survivors' Bonds with Animals

Survivors' partners used the human-animal bond to terrorize and control them. For example, one abuser took the survivor's cat with him when he left the house so she would not leave while he was away. Another woman recalled, "he recognized our bond as something he could exploit."

A common theme throughout the research was abusive partners' jealousy of the bond between the survivor and her animals. These meaningful and mutually supportive relationships were often a source of contention, with abusive partners expressing dissatisfaction that animals listened to survivors. Abusive partners were jealous that companion animals preferred the women and were jealous of the time women spent with their animals and the affection that they had for them:

They were always closer to me than to him . . . As soon as I would come home, the dogs would sit on the couch by me, they would come into the bedroom, sleep on the bed with me or sleep on the floor. They'd spend very little time with him. He'd say, "I don't know why your dogs think you're so effing great because you're nothing but an old bag."

Another survivor's partner took issue with her relationship with her horses, in part because of the time she spent with them but also because training was something she was skilled at and did independently: "I trained horses . . . it pissed him off because it was something I was good at . . . he didn't like it."

Another woman shared how her partner tried to prevent her from taking time to ride her horse, something that was positive for her mental health and an independent activity for her:

It was like pulling teeth to get away to go see my horse. There are multiple occasions where he'd tell me, "Oh, you don't need to go do that," or "Why do you want to go do that?" Or, "Why do you still have the horse? Why don't you just get rid of it?" He really wanted me to get rid of all my animals, and I found it very hard.

The same woman explained that her partner would deny her access to the vehicle so she could not see her horse, which was boarded at a nearby stable:

He would complain if I were to go see her. He would say that the car had problems, couldn't be driven . . . I never had access to the vehicle. Even when I was working, he would drop me off and pick me up. Whatever he said, goes. That's basically it. But he would also be able to go to his baseball and hockey and all his sports that he was interested in. It's just that there were problems when it came to me seeing my horse.

Survivors' Bonds with Horses and Cows

Survivors explained how they worked with animals in a patient and empathetic way, in contrast to their former partners' rough treatment of animals. A woman with cattle explained: "I could get them to do almost anything. I didn't have to holler at them. All I needed was patience, and I was able to do a lot of things that I needed to do, and they were good." Her partner accused her of "babying" the cows. Another woman also described how her cattle reacted to the demeanor of the humans who cared for them. A participant spoke of the importance of her relationship with her horse:

Often I would manage to pick a day on the weekend, during a day when I knew my ex would be mostly sober, mostly capable of parenting, and then I would be able to leave and go ride my horse. Or I would have his mom take our son, and then I would go ride my horse . . . My horse really helped a lot. He kinda gave me a break from stress cause when you're on a horse, you can't be thinking about all those awful or anxious things that are going on in your life because the horse will pick up on that, so you have to be very present, and I found that very helpful. My horse is a big help.

Financial issues complicated survivors' relationships with horses and other large animals. Sometimes, animals must be sold or a herd must be divided when separating from a partner. Survivors' bonds with large animals may go unrecognized in such transactions, and authorities

may view animals narrowly, as a source of financial value. One woman explained how when she tried to seek temporary financial assistance after leaving the relationship, she was told to sell her expensive horse. She stated that she chose not to do this, explaining that her bond with her animals was beyond their financial worth:

Social Services was like, “Hey, sell your \$50,000 horse.” But to me, my rescue horses and fancy horses, they were the same. Right now . . . I have a cat that we picked up full of worms, ear mites, and in disgusting condition and my \$5,000 dog from Europe. They eat the same. They [are loved] the same. And if you tell me to choose . . . [I wouldn’t].

She continued, stating that her horses and dogs were viewed “as a luxury, as accessories.” She said that she had sold luxury items, such as a handbag, when she was short on money after leaving, but “We don’t get rid of family members—what are we going to teach the kids?” Further, positioning animals as dispensable “luxuries” reveals an inherent class bias. For many survivors, especially those living rurally or on farms, large animals are not merely accessories or hobbies; rather, they constitute a crucial source of livelihood both before and after separation from an abusive partner.

Survivors’ Bonds with Companion Animals

Survivors spoke of the love they had for their companion animals and the emotional support that they gained from these relationships. One recalled, “I loved her so much. She was my best friend.” Another survivor shared:

We had each other . . . [cat] was like my baby. I was the only one that he would snuggle up with or that he would purr to. He didn’t like that affection from anyone else; it was just from me . . . he could tell if I was upset or stressed out or scared or whether [boyfriend] was home or was about to come home . . . that anxiety in me, how’s he going

to walk in the door this time . . . it's almost like the cat knew that and came up on my leg or beside me.

The survivor who experienced her partner kill one of her two kittens said of the other cat:

At the time, [cat] was—and [still] is—my world, the best thing that ever happened to me. She's very much a mama's girl. We were—and are—very close. During this time, she saved my life at least once, but she simultaneously gave me something worth living for.

Companion animals consoled survivors after incidents of IPV: "She'd always be there to comfort me afterwards." Animals were also a catalyst for survivors to realize how dangerous the relationship was and to plan for escape: "On one hand, I stayed in part because I was afraid for her safety. On the other hand, she was such a source of comfort. She was my rock. She saved my life. She got us out." Another survivor told of hiding with her dog after a violent assault:

. . . and she crawled behind there, and I crawled in behind her. Hear him upstairs. I couldn't get my vehicle out because his was parked right behind mine. I heard the vehicle leave, and I thought, "Let's get out of here." So I said to [dog], "Go get your bowl."

She's such a smart dog. She went and got her bowl. I got her some dog food. I got my . . . I remember explicitly; I got my medicine, I got my glasses, and . . . I think a nightgown and my hair thing, and I put it in the backpack. I said, "[dog], let's go." She jumped in the car, and then I thought we're doomed because there's only one way in and one way out.

She continued, "I don't know if I could have done it without her. I couldn't have left her behind."

Companion animals provided much-needed love and comfort for humans when they were experiencing IPV; they also provided support for survivors after they escaped the relationships and began healing. A participant explained that having cats in the house mitigated feelings of

loneliness now that she was living alone. Further, animals offer protection and a sense of security, which one survivor noted:

I know that if somebody is trying to get in the house, they will have to first deal with my dogs; meanwhile, it will buy [time] for my children and for police to arrive. Never mind the safety and some stability that these animals give to my kids.

Three of the fifteen interview participants shared about times when they had actively contemplated suicide but chose not to follow through because their animals would not be cared for after their death. The survivor whose partner was sexually violent and also killed her kitten explained, “I was highly suicidal; [the remaining cat] had just stopped me from OD’ing. If I killed myself, [she] would be left alone with him. I had to at least try to get us out.” A survivor who had immigrated to Canada and had children with her ex-partner explained how she felt trapped “in a foreign country, no family, no parents, dealing with this;” however, care for her animals (horses, dogs, and cats) was the reason she kept going.

Caring for Animals in a Home Where Violence is Occurring

Participants spoke of their responsibility and care for animals and their efforts to keep them safe while experiencing IPV. One woman said:

He’d been sending me text messages all day, and I knew that he was going to be in a really bad mood. You could just tell by the content of his messages. I said to my manager, “I’m really scared to go home.” And they knew what was happening, they knew what was going on. And they said, “Well, don’t go home now.” “I have to go,” I said, “I’ve got dogs, I’ve got to go. If something happens and I don’t show up for work, call the RCMP.”

He violently assaulted and strangled her that night.

Survivors spoke of how conflicted they felt, caring for animals while they remained in relationships where their partner harmed them and their animal companions:

It is so disheartening to look back and see how the animals in my home were treated. I wish I could undo that, but I'm also so grateful to have them because I think they helped me through so many very, very difficult things.

The women experienced the emotional toll of being unable to keep their animals safe from their partners' violence: "I felt responsible too. Because they were mine, and I couldn't protect them."

Survivors reported that care for animals was a barrier to spending time outside the home: I was always stressed out if I had to go away for a weekend. I would be going with my son but leaving my animals behind. I was always worried that they weren't going to be fed or watered or that I'd come home and they were injured by him. I couldn't imagine leaving them behind and trying to get out. If I had ended the relationship and had to leave them in the house with him, I don't know what would become of them, to be honest.

Escaping IPV While Caring for Animals

Participants identified several challenges when attempting to leave a relationship when experiencing IPV and caring for animals. Animal ownership increased the time required to leave due to the complexity of arranging a plan that includes animals. Relatedly, finding secure housing in which animals were welcome was a challenge for many of the participants. Especially in the case of livestock and large animals, having the abusive partner removed from the home may be a logical option; however, participants identified significant challenges in doing so.

Animals as Barriers to Leaving

A common theme throughout participants' stories was the length of time it took to successfully escape relationships with their animals:

I think it was probably about a year and a half before this actually ended that I was working on trying to figure out what to do. Where do you go with 17 horses? And where do you go with two big German Shepherds?

Victims/survivors explained how care for animals was a barrier to leaving due to challenges or inability to transport animals and secure housing where they could keep the animals. Some of the women who cared for companion animals remained in the relationships much longer than they wished to because they were unable to access shelter or housing with their companion animals or access temporary animal safekeeping. One survivor explained, "It kept me from making any attempts to leave. I was afraid that if something went wrong and I wasn't able to get away and stay gone and hidden, that [cat] would be hurt or killed." She continued, "Also, I stayed because I didn't have anywhere safe for her to go while I got myself out." Some of the women's partners were aware of how difficult it would be for the women to leave the relationship and keep their animals, something that they used to their advantage:

I told him that this is it. This is it; there is no way back. We are done. And he said, "If you make this decision, you're going to lose everything . . . You're going to lose the roof above your head. I will take care of the kids, you will go to a homeless shelter, and there is no place for your dogs and horses there." This is exactly what he said because he knew how to keep me there by having power over me through my animals.

Another woman spoke of remaining in the relationship while she worked toward financial independence:

Part of the reason why I had trouble leaving is because, financially, finding a new place to live that would take somebody with a child and a large dog and a cat . . . It felt really hard. And also still having to pay towards my horse on top of things, that was a

consideration financially. It was only when I was in a position where I could afford my life that I pulled the plug on the relationship because I knew I couldn't afford to otherwise.

One woman explained that cats were continually being abandoned at their rural property, which was right off a main highway. The cats “would be pregnant, they would be sick. There was one cat that was pitched out of a vehicle window. There was a spay and neuter program at one of the vets in the city. I would take an entire litter there just to have them all done. And it wouldn't be cheap.” Although it was not her choice to have so many cats on the property, this survivor felt responsible for caring for them. She was refused multiple times by animal rescue groups when she requested help to “re-home the cats to good homes, reduce my obligations to those animals. That would allow me to be free of this relationship.” She stayed in the relationship until she could ensure the cats were taken care of and safely re-homed.

Children's bonds with animals were a consideration for women when they were planning to escape as well; some said that they knew their children would have refused to leave without their pet or been devastated to leave the pet behind. Some women, who had young children at the time they left the relationship, stated that they would not have chosen to leave if they had to separate their children from their animals. One woman expressed that it was hard enough for her children to lose their home; she did not want them to lose their animals too:

I think if you're trying to get yourself settled, your life is already disrupted, so do you disrupt it even more by pulling the kids away from their pet or the pet away from the person, the woman whose maybe sole companion is that pet . . . you're splitting up a family.

It is important to note that children are not just impacted by the loss of indoor animal companions, such as cats and dogs. One participant spoke of her daughter's sadness when they no longer lived in the family home where her horse was in the yard:

My daughter cries every night, running to me in my room, that she misses her horse. She grew up with her. As long as she remembers, that was part of the family.

Seeking Animal-Friendly Housing

Participants described the challenge of locating animal-friendly housing after leaving:

It was more stressful having [the dog] because then where do you go, what do you do?

Most houses, if you were gonna rent, you couldn't take a dog with you, couldn't go into an apartment . . . I was really restricted.

This survivor ended up having to be separated from her dog for a period of time while she rented an apartment: "That was very difficult." She eventually got her dog back when she was able to rent a different place. Another survivor whose cat had also been abused rented an apartment: "I snuck him in. There was no pets allowed, but I took the cat anyway."

One survivor was able to rent an acreage where she was able to take her horse. Another survivor recalled that she:

. . . was looking for someplace to go. And I did talk to one of the people I know in the horse community, who had a room to rent and had an area for horses. I talked to her, and she knew there were some issues. And I said, "Can I come? Can I bring my horses? I'll rent a room . . ." And she said "no," because she didn't want to get involved.

After her request to rent a room and bring her horses did not work out, she recalled:

I just kind of quietly looked for stuff. What are my options? What could I do? Could I rent a farm, could I talk to [family members], and could they look after some of my

animals, and then how could I choose which horses I would take? And how do you get that many horses off the property when you are never left alone?

Some survivors were able to temporarily stay with family members or have family members temporarily keep their animals. This was not possible for all the participants; some did not have family who were able to help, and others worried about putting family members in jeopardy. For those who boarded animals with family members, this was not without challenges. One survivor felt that relatives who cared for her dog were unnecessarily strict. By the time she lived in a home where she could have brought the dog, the dog was quite old and had bonded with the children that she had been living with, so the human survivor felt it was better to leave the dog in her current home. Another survivor left her horse with her parents when she escaped the relationship, and her father made her sell her horse. She said, “My dad felt that I did not need my horse anymore, and he made me sell her . . . And I was raised, you do not confront my dad, you do not. I was very obedient. You did not question anything my dad said . . .” The survivor, who had the horse for many years, said, “Losing her really, really affected me.”

Animal Safekeeping

Two participants in the study had left with companion animals and stayed in domestic violence shelters. One woman explained that the shelter was able to arrange temporary safekeeping for her cat, “but had they not found a place for the cat, the kids and I would’ve been roughing it.” She explained that her daughter would have refused to leave home without the cat. While they were at the shelter, her daughter missed the cat and would cry without it to sleep with at night. Another survivor explained that the shelter she stayed at did not allow dogs, but when she went after a violent assault in which the police intervened, needing somewhere safe to go, they made an exception and allowed her to stay the night with her dog.

Survivors Losing Access to Home and Animals

Considering the challenges of finding pet-friendly housing, as well as difficulty securing space for horses and other large animals, it would be easier for many survivors with animals to stay in the home and continue providing care for their animals, with their partner being the one to leave. One woman recounted that her partner was arrested and then subjected to conditions not to contact her while she stayed in the home. Two participants reported barriers to having the abusive partner removed from the home, which would have allowed them to stay with their animals. One woman stated that her husband “had been physically threatening and intimidating, but he had never actually physically harmed us. He did harm [the animals],” however she was told by police that they could not remove him from the home unless he was physically violent toward her:

“[Police] came, but they told me, ‘technically, we can’t do anything, technically, he lives here, unless he hits you, we can’t really do anything about this, but we can try and talk him into leaving.’ And they told me just to move out, find somewhere else to live.”

Another participant was not informed by police that removal of the abusive partner was possible:

“Later on, when I talked to my lawyer, he said [the police] could have removed him, but they never made me aware that I could remove him since I was looking after the cattle.” This woman continued to drive 30 minutes to milk the cows each day, an act later questioned by police:

Every time I would drive out, he would call the cops and lie. [Say that] I was interfering with him doing his work in the yard, so the cops would call me, yell at me, and tell me, “You say you fear for your life, but I find it hard to believe because you’re still willing to drive out there and look after your cows.” I said, “I have no choice. They need to be milked.” They said, “We don’t want to be in a position where we have to arrest you.”

Dividing Horses and Livestock in Separation

Respondents explained how they had to divide property, including animals, after separation. While the purchase price of animals is often considered in negotiations regarding the division of property, the time invested in training and caring for them is not. Several of the survivors in this study reported that they were the ones who trained horses and provided care for horses and cattle. Losing these animals was a significant loss to the survivors because of their bonds with and care for the animals and also because they were losing the time they had invested in the animals. A survivor explained how she had trained horses and used them to deliver riding lessons—when her former partner prevented her from keeping the horses that she used for lessons, he eliminated this source of income. Starting over would require her not only to purchase more horses but to invest many hours of training time:

He wanted so many of the horses. I had purchased them myself. I was caring for them . . . I did have to give up some of the horses, which was devastating. Because of the time frame that they were bought, he was able to say, “I get half of them” . . . Even though they were mine, I had put the training into them . . . The horses that I worked with and trained, they got sold at auction . . . And when it was decided which ones were mine and which ones were his, he fought for the ones that were trained because I gave riding lessons.

Another survivor explained how, after separation, she was not given the opportunity to decide with her former partner what to do with their cattle; he chose to sell cows in an arrangement that was not profitable rather than earning income that he would then have to split with her.

He had sold half the cows with their calves already because he can do what he wants. But these cows were young cows that were born and raised on the farm that I took care of.

And to get back at me, he sold them for slaughter . . . Pregnant cows went for slaughter, just to get back at me. Even though he could have taken them to a bred cow sale on a different day. Me and my lawyer added up almost a \$30,000 loss. Just to get back at me, because if he got more for the cows, that would mean I would [also] get more.

Survivors' Recommendations

Survivors offered suggestions regarding the care and safekeeping of livestock and large animals, such as horses, and safekeeping for companion animals. Recommendations included pet-friendly domestic violence shelters, fostering, and animal safekeeping programs. They also highlighted the need for pet-friendly rental housing, supports for rural survivors, and legal mechanisms to keep human and animal survivors safe.

Regarding pet-friendly shelters, participants noted that some dogs have needs that could create challenges in a domestic violence shelter, such as dogs that are not crate-trained or dogs that typically do not get along with other dogs. They mentioned considerations for dogs of different ages, dogs with medical needs, and considerations regarding dogs' previous training, as well as the comfort of other residents in the shelter. Ultimately, however, participants stressed the importance of keeping families together. One survivor specifically recommended that shelters engage an animal behaviorist to work with families with animals who had experienced violence. One survivor suggested that the ideal pet-friendly domestic violence shelter would be a duplex or similar building where residents have their own entrances; another noted that second-stage shelters, which are longer-term shelters where residents have their own apartments, would work well for survivors with companion animals.²

One survivor shared that she had boarded her dog at a kennel for a short period; however, she recognized that this would not be possible for many other survivors due to the cost. Others

noted that animal safekeeping at animal welfare agencies or fostering through rescues could help some survivors and their animals, though they acknowledged the burden that is already on these agencies with animals in their care. Two interview respondents stated that they would be willing to foster companion animals for women experiencing IPV. A survivor remarked that when accessing animal safekeeping programs, it is necessary to have the assurance that it is temporary and that “you’re getting your cat back or your dog back . . . it’s a hard enough situation to go through, never mind losing a pet.”

Participants suggested that perhaps ranchers would be willing to assist by temporarily boarding animals. Some respondents also said that they would like to help other women with horses or other large animals. One survivor explained:

[I] would definitely go on this list. . . . I would take my truck and trailer and pick up a horse if it meant that someone was going to be able to leave and be safe. I think it would be beneficial to know if you have horses; these are people that you can call.

She emphasized the need for distance from the perpetrator and the importance of confidentiality and safety measures to be taken by the person who was boarding the animals:

Distance may be [a strategy for safety]. But whoever was looking after the animals would have to have that knowledge, to know not to give information out. I know for myself that horses would have to be out of sight. I think there definitely could be an opportunity for retaliation or trying to get the horses back. There may be that. But the benefit would outweigh the risk, I think.

The need for pet-friendly social housing and market rental housing was mentioned by several participants, who noted that while survivors may be able to access social housing, pets are not allowed. One stated that she knew a few women who “got into social housing . . . but

they will never be making enough to rent a pet-friendly home in a couple of months.”

Participants noted other challenges with trying to rent. Many landlords do not allow any pets; others allow cats but do not accept dogs. Rentals that do accept companion animals often charge a pet fee on top of rent. One woman said: “I have lived in lots of pretty crappy places over the years just because they were the only places that I could find that allowed you to have pets.”

Survivors expressed the need for public awareness regarding IPV and available services, as well as the link between animal maltreatment and IPV and how to access help for both humans and animals. Survivors noted that it is important for domestic violence shelters and services to ask about animals when someone who is experiencing IPV calls to inquire about shelter or other support so that victims know that options are available to assist them in planning for the safety of their animals. Participants also stated that police should ask if animals had been harmed or were at risk—and take this into consideration—when intervening in cases of IPV.

Emergency Intervention Orders (EIO)³ could allow survivors to stay in the home while their partner is required to leave. This option could allow survivors to continue living with their companion animals and maintain the regular care and feeding of livestock. Only one survivor in this study was granted temporary possession of the home, while her partner was subjected to conditions not to contact her. Another survivor, who continued to return to the farm where her partner resided to milk cows and provide other care for animals, wished she had been offered this option. Staying in the home with an EIO in place will not be safe in all situations of IPV; however, survivors should have the opportunity to choose what they feel will work best for them, informed by risk assessment information and in conjunction with risk management strategies for the perpetrator.

One survivor explained that toward the end of the relationship, she started documenting all of her work with animals, such as vaccinations for cattle. Another woman wished she had documentation of her hours spent training and working with animals. Interview participants spoke of the challenges of dividing animals with other shared property, which does not account for the purpose and use of animals, their relationships with them, and the need for animals' ongoing care.

Discussion

Interview participants recounted experiences of various forms of IPV, including coercive control and psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and economic abuse. Several participants had experienced severe physical violence and potentially life-threatening assaults, including strangulation; others had not experienced physical violence but had experienced psychological abuse and coercive control. This is in line with previous research that demonstrates the connection between animal abuse and coercive control and other severe forms of IPV and risk of lethality (Barrett et al., 2020, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Giesbrecht, 2022a, 2022b; Hardesty et al., 2013; Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2019).

Interview participants recounted experiences of various forms of harm and maltreatment directed toward animals by their partners, including physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse of companion animals, threats to harm companion animals and livestock, as well as instances where animals were intentionally killed by their abusive partners. In some cases, threats, abuse, and killing of animals took place after the survivor had exited the relationship.

Survivors provided examples of perpetrators who used threats and harm toward animals in an instrumental fashion, as well as violence that appeared to be reactive or impulsive. Consistent with findings from a recent survey (Giesbrecht, 2022b), responses further elucidate

that there are different types of perpetrators who harm their partners and animals, including individuals who are violent to animals to control and terrorize their intimate partners; those who make threats to harm animals to control their partners, though they may not act on these threats; and those who are abusive to both humans and animals, though the violence may not be enacted with the intent of controlling the human victim.

Regardless of the intention, when survivors care for animals, this exacerbates fear and creates additional barriers to leaving the relationship. The most dangerous time for an individual experiencing IPV is when they are planning to leave or have left the relationship (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2019). The findings of the present study revealed that danger to animals can also increase after a relationship has ended. Further, animal maltreatment can continue after a relationship has ended, in that animals can be harmed, neglected, or killed by the perpetrator of violence, sometimes as an act of revenge. As such, when indicators of animal maltreatment are present, it is imperative to assess risk to human family members as well as risk to animals and to include animals when safety planning with human survivors. It is important for professionals to have education, training, and information on the link between IPV and animal treatment, as well as available animal welfare and safekeeping services in order to assist human victims/survivors who are at risk in planning for the safety of their animals. This also means that resources must be available, including pet-friendly domestic violence shelters and rental housing, and animal safekeeping programs. Febres et al. (2014) recommended screening men who perpetrate IPV for animal abuse when they enter IPV intervention programs. This is important for managing the risk posed by these perpetrators and for tailoring interventions to reduce risk. In addition, further research into types of perpetrators of IPV and animal abuse will help professionals to better assess and manage the risk posed by these individuals.

In the present study, an interview participant stated that when seeking support after IPV, her horses and dogs were viewed “as a luxury;” other participants encountered similar attitudes. This is in line with the survey of survivors (Giesbrecht, 2022b), where a respondent wrote that her horse was also considered “a luxury” and she was told to give up the horse when she was looking for housing and planning to escape the relationship. It is well documented within the research literature that considering animals to be “luxuries” denies and devalues the human-animal bond that is of great significance to many individuals (Barrett et al., 2018; Crawford & Bohac Clarke, 2012; Collins et al., 2018; Flynn, 2000; Hardesty et al., 2013). When victims/survivors are put in a position where they are forced to choose to be safe or keep their animals, this further increases the emotional turmoil that survivors and their children face. When women survivors are unable to leave or to secure housing with their animals, this robs them of the companionship, love, and support that animals provide to survivors and children, which in turn, causes emotional harm to survivors, children, and animals. Consistent with previous research, the current study revealed that it is most often survivors of violence that are forced to start over again, including leaving their homes, communities, and jobs, which puts them in a position of needing to rebuild their lives. This is rarely the case for perpetrators of violence, who are not often in a situation where they must rebuild their lives to the same extent. Thus, when support is not available to individuals who own and care for animals, this reinforces the expectation that survivors must lose everything in order to be safe.

Conclusion

The present study provides further insight into the experiences of victims/survivors of IPV within the context of experiences of animal maltreatment, the human-animal bond, and escaping IPV while caring for animals. Data were collected from survivors in both urban and

rural locations who cared for companion animals and livestock. These results add to the growing body of knowledge of animal maltreatment, barriers, and service provision in rural communities, particularly when large animals are involved. This study provides critical knowledge regarding the complexities that these survivors face. The findings underscore the importance of developing and implementing a collaborative approach to supporting women leaving IPV who care for companion animals and livestock. Future research is warranted to continue to seek a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences with IPV and animal maltreatment in urban, rural, and northern areas.

Notes

¹ While an attempt was made to recruit participants who had service animals, no victims/survivors with service animals were interviewed.

² Since these data were collected, Saskatchewan domestic violence shelters following both of these models (Regina Transition House and SOFIA House) have begun sheltering survivors with their pets. Domestic violence shelters in Saskatchewan that accept pets are listed at pathssk.org/get-help-now.

³ An Emergency Intervention Order (EIO) is a temporary order that grants the victim the right to stay in the home while the perpetrator is removed from the home (*The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Act*, S.S., 1994, c. V-6.02). In other jurisdictions, such orders are often referred to as an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).

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